

11175. X-e. 116
5

A S E R M O N, &c.

Call upon me in the time of trouble: so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me.

PSALM l. 15.



A

SERMON

OCCASIONED BY

THE GENERAL FAST,

FEBRUARY 25th, 1795;

(AND PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION.)

BY THE REV. JOHN MYDDELTON, B. D.

FELLOW OF SIDNEY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND CURATE OF WROTHAM, IN KENT.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD, BY V. GRIFFITHS, NO. 169, STRAND;

SOLD ALSO BY

RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;

AND GARDNER, IN THE STRAND.

1533



A

S E R M O N, &c.

PSALM L. 15.

CALL UPON ME IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE; SO WILL I HEAR
THEE, AND THOU SHALT PRAISE ME.

AMIDST the storms and tempests of this lower world, it is no small degree of consolation to know that Christians have a God in covenant, to apply to at all times, and in all places.

The Lord who searches the heart, knoweth them that are his, and continually watcheth over them with a paternal regard. Sensible of this, with the greater confidence they wait on him, put their trust in him, and cast all their care upon him.

The promise contained in the text being a great encouragement to call upon God, it is peculiarly applicable to the present

A

solemn

solemn occasion, and well calculated to dissipate your fears, and animate your hopes.

“Call upon me,” says the Lord, “in the time of trouble: So will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me:” Since there may be a time of trouble to individuals and nations, it will be proper to consider the force of the expression when applied to each.--- With respect to individuals, their troubles refer to the mind, body or estate. Apprehension even of temporal evil is often productive of great uneasiness to the mind; how much greater is that uneasiness which is occasioned by the sense of God’s displeasure, and the apprehension of future punishment! When the conscience of a sinner is awakened, and the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against him, when the weight of his sins presses heavy on his mind, and the fear of death overwhelms him, unspeakable is the anguish of his heart, for though “the spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear?” In vain he seeks for refuge in the pleasures of the world; he wants that peace which the world cannot give. Where shall he find it? ’Tis no where to be found but in the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who gives this gracious invitation to all that are troubled in mind on account of sin, “come unto

unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

But individuals may be troubled in body as well as in mind. Various are the disorders, innumerable the accidents to which the human frame is exposed. All men are liable to them from the highest to the lowest. Every day's experience shews that the most vigorous and healthy are soon brought down. The strongest plant is in a moment blighted. We know not what the morrow may bring forth. In the midst of life we are in death; "but should we be so strong as to come to four score years, yet is our strength then but labor and sorrow." In the world we see abundance of tribulation. It is part of the wages of sin. "An unwise man doth not well consider this," but the godly lay it to heart.---If man were not born in sin, surely he would not be born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards, his beauty would not consume away like a moth fretting a garment.

Great are the changes and chances of this mortal life. Various the means by which they are brought about. The iron hand of oppression, the secret attack of the robber, a sudden accident by fire, a tempest, or a flood, may reduce the most prosperous to the lowest state of adversity. The possibility of

such an event, while it is a caution to the affluent to be humble, thankful and liberal, is an encouragement to the indigent to be patient, contented, and submissive. In the history of Job we have a memorable instance of the uncertainty of human possessions. The Sabeans fell upon his oxen, fire from heaven burnt up his sheep, the Chaldeans fell upon his camels and carried them away, a rushing mighty wind smote the four corners of the house where his sons and daughters were eating and drinking, and they were buried in the ruins. But need we have recourse to Job for the confirmation of this truth? The present times afford variety of instances to prove it. How many are there in this country, once the sons and daughters of ease and affluence, now reduced to cheerless vagrancy! Under such circumstances to be able to say with Job, "blessed be the name of the Lord" requires no small degree of faith, resignation, and fortitude. So gracious and merciful is the Lord, that to those who love him he giveth songs in the dark night of affliction.---But it is time to consider the day of trouble when applied to nations. In the prophet Ezekiel, there are mentioned four sore judgments, which God brings upon a land for the wickedness of them that dwell therein; the noisome beast, the pestilence, the famine, and the sword.

When

When nations abuse the mercies bestowed upon them, God can, if he pleases, cause noisome beasts to become so numerous, as to devour not only flocks and herds, but men, women, and children. After the captivity of the ten tribes, the cities of Samaria were inhabited by a mixture of idolaters, whom the King of Assyria sent there; but the Lord, because they feared not him, sent lions among them, and devoured many of them. From the plagues of Egypt we learn, that God can increase even frogs, flies and locusts, so as to render them extremely pernicious to a country. And from the prophet Joel we learn what destruction God brought upon the land of Canaan by insects. "Tell ye your children," says the prophet, "and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation, that which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten, and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker worm eaten, and that which the canker worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten."

Pestilence is another national calamity with which God visits a land. It is a contagious disease that infects the blood, and in a short time terminates in death. A little more than a century ago, it raged in the metropolis of this kingdom; many thousands fell victims to its rage, and terror and dismay prevailed throughout

throughout the land. Its recent effects at Philadelphia were dreadful beyond description. The possibility of its coming home to us, ought to awaken in us the most serious impressions of sorrow and contrition for our national guilt, and the most fervent prayers, that God would be pleased to spare us, though we have been rebellious against him. There is an uncommon mortality now in the metropolis; to what degree it will increase if our national sins increase, God only knows.

Another judgment which God brings upon a country is famine. If God blight the corn for one year only, how dreadful must be the consequence! Its direful effects would be felt by all ranks and degrees of people. While Jacob sojourned in the Land of Promise, there was a grievous famine in Egypt, and Canaan itself, that land of plenty, was at the same time destitute of corn. The Canaanite was then in the land. But when possessed by the people of God, it was visited with the same calamity. God was provoked to send that judgment upon them, because their national sins were grown enormous. "They said not in their hearts, let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season, he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Since they acknowledged not the hand of the Lord in the
fruits

fruits of the earth, it was just in God to cut them off; this therefore he did, and added famine to their other calamities. After their return from Babylon also because they suffered his temple to lie in ruins, "the Heaven over them was stayed from dew, and the earth was stayed from her fruit; and God called for a drought upon the land, upon the mountains, and upon the corn." Since then God makes a fruitful land barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, it behoveth us to own, and turn from our transgressions, and to serve the living God with all our hearts.

It is incumbent upon us to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in the blessings we enjoy, and our entire unworthiness of the least of them, to own our dependence upon him for their continuance, and to use them to his glory, and the happiness of our fellow creatures.

The last judgment mentioned by the prophet, is the sword. It is that which God frequently used to chastise his people Israel, to humble them, to convince them of their sins, and to reduce them to obedience. In the days of the Judges, they forsook God their Saviour, who had done so great things for them; then was God wroth with his inheritance, and stirred

up

up the nations round about them, and fought against them, and prospered the arms of their enemies, until his people repented, and turned unto the Lord their God. In process of time, the nation become so abominably wicked, that the sword was commanded to go through the land and devour. The army of the Chaldeans executed the righteous judgments of God upon them, and so dreadful was the devastation, that the land which was "as the garden of Eden before them, became behind them desolate wilderness." This is the judgment with which we are at this time more particularly threatened. The sword is unsheathed, and hath slain its thousands. God forbid it should be commanded to go through this land, as through the land of Judah. A nation fierce and warlike, an army great and strong, threaten to invade you, and to overturn your government in church and state. By the language they hold out, what can we expect from their devouring sword, but ruin and desolation. One of their avowed objects is to abolish Christianity, but that is impossible. "Whosoever makes war with the Lamb, the Lamb will overcome, for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings."

Whether they are presumptuous enough to attempt to deprive you of the inestimable blessing of the Gospel, this they
certainly

certainly aim at, to plunder and destroy. And with regard to the metropolis of this kingdom, they say in the language of the children of Edom, "down with it, down with it even to the ground." But however formidable their number, however great their success, be not afraid nor dismayed; only fear the Lord and serve him with all your hearts, then need we not doubt, but that God will go out with our hosts, and fight for us against this great multitude. To make all possible preparation against them is undoubtedly right; vain however are the most vigorous preparations, ineffectual the most powerful alliances without the aid of God; but if the Almighty arm of Jehovah be stretched out to save and defend us, we shall yet be able to do great acts, and to tread them down that rise up against us.

God then being our chief support in the time of trouble, in him we ought to trust, upon him we ought to call; and this he hath encouraged us to do in the text "call upon Me," says the Lord. It is the truest wisdom and soundest policy to make supplication unto the Lord, because he has all wisdom to contrive, all power to effect, and all goodness to bestow, what is most for the real interest of his faithful people. He is omniscient and omnipresent. "Before the mountains were brought forth,

or ever the earth and the world were made, he is God from everlasting and world without end." This great God of events, whom we are exhorted to call upon, is the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle. His glory is displayed in the works of creation and providence, but especially in that of redemption. He has been our refuge from one generation to another. Long has he preserved our happy constitution in church and state, from foreign and domestic foes; and unless our national sins (for they are very great) have ripened us for judgment, we may with confidence hope, that he will still interpose in our behalf and avert the impending danger. In order to this, it is the duty of all ranks and degrees of men, to call upon God, to prevail with whom "we must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But to render our prayers effectual, they must be presented in the name and through the mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by whom alone we have access unto the Father. This is necessary, because as descendants of Adam, we are guilty before God, and unworthy in ourselves to offer up any sacrifice. Without faith in Christ it is impossible to please God. He it is that renders our petitions an acceptable offering. Our prayers in order to be heard must also be sincere and fervent; they must flow from the heart.

God

God is not satisfied with lip service; he requires truth and sincerity in the inward parts. There must likewise be earnestness and importunity in prayer. But will God in very deed hear the petitions of them that unfeignedly call upon him? He expressly declares in the text, that he will: For he says, "call upon me in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me." He is a God that not only hears, but answers prayer. The successes of the Assyrians against the kingdom of Israel, induced them to think that they should be equally successful against the kingdom of Judah. The letter which they sent threatening the destruction of Jerusalem, and reproaching the living God, Hezekiah the king went up into the temple and spread before the Lord, devoutly praying that God would deliver him out of the hand of the Assyrians. A message was immediately dispatched to Hezekiah, by the prophet Isaiah; "thus saith the Lord concerning the King of Assyria. He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it; by the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord; for I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." If the French, elated with their success in Holland, think they can as easily accomplish the destruction of

this government, and make England a province to France, may the Lord disappoint their expectations; may he defend our king as he did Hezekiah, and say to that haughty nation, as to the waves of the sea, "hitherto shall ye go but no further." There was an equally signal interposition of divine providence in behalf of Jehoshaphat; for when he found himself surrounded by his enemies, he proclaimed a Fast throughout his dominion, and made supplication to the Lord, and said; O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in Heaven, and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the Heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" So when Jehoshaphat and the inhabitants of Jerusalem had prayed and made supplication to the Lord, the spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel in the midst of the congregation, and he said, hearken ye all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat; thus saith the Lord unto you, "be not afraid, nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. And he added, ye shall not need to fight in this battle. That he was a true prophet, appeared by the event; for the next day, when they went to the watch tower in the wilderness, they found the enemy fallen dead upon the ground. Encouraged by the efficacy of prayer, and by the infallibility of the word

word and promises of God, our gracious sovereign hath again proclaimed a Fast throughout his dominions, to deprecate the judgments and implore the blessings of Heaven. We are therefore assembled to approach "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity" in behalf of ourselves and the nation, with penitent hearts and lively faith, humbly confessing and lamenting our own sins, and the sins of the nation; at the same time acknowledging that practical atheism, infidelity and licentiousness so much abound among us that we have reason to apprehend, because we deserve, the judgments of God. We are assembled devoutly to implore the forgiveness of our own sins and those of the nation, earnestly entreating an abundant measure of grace, that we may be able to turn from the error of our way into the knowledge and obedience of the truth. It is to beg of God to invigorate our drowsy wills and affections, and to strengthen our feeble resolutions; to make us as we profess to be, an holy nation, a peculiar people. It is to beseech the Lord to go out with our hosts, and to frustrate the designs of our enemies, to prosper our national counsels, and direct them to such measures as shall more effectually promote the glory of his name, the good of his church, and the welfare and prosperity of our sovereign and his kingdoms. Do we then earnestly confess and lament our sins? And are we resolved by the help of
 God,

God, to turn from them? Is it the desire of our hearts to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? "God will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will help them." If therefore the petitions this day presented to the throne of grace, be unfeigned and earnest, there is reason to hope that God will turn our humiliation, into thanksgiving and the voice of melody, and enable us to sing the song of Moses: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed the enemy in pieces: And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee." But if our prayers be destitute of warmth and sincerity, if the resolutions this day formed by us be like the morning cloud or like the early dew, we cannot suppose that they will avail any thing, either to the prosperity of the nation, or the happiness of ourselves.

Repentance is of a real, permanent nature; it implies a change of mind and heart, a conversion of the soul to God. As we profess ourselves disciples of the Lord Jesus, let us also recollect, that faith in him is not a bare assent of the understanding, or confession of the mouth, but a firm reliance upon him for salvation, and for every thing of which we stand in need:

need: It is to receive him in his various relations to us, particularly as our King, Priest, and Prophet. Let it be our fervent request therefore that the Lord would mercifully bestow upon us, these spiritual blessings, that he would give us a new heart, renew a right spirit within us, and make us wise unto salvation. No nation under Heaven enjoys greater opportunities of religious improvement than our own; let us not neglect or despise them, but use them diligently and "seek the Lord while he may be found, lest there should come a time when he will not be found."

These considerations are of the utmost importance, for whatever be the issue of the war, death and eternity are certain, and not far distant from any of us. What are all the commotions upon earth to a dying man? Sublunary things vanish before him, and eternity opens to his view. The great question with him is, where shall I be in eternity? Am I at peace with God? Is he my reconciled Father? If he can answer in the affirmative, happy is he, henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of glory. The judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and by them, by his word, and by his ministers, he calls aloud to repentance. He expostulates with us, as
with

with his people of old in the most compassionate manner,
 “why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

As national sins cause national judgments, national repentance brings down national blessings; for thus saith the Lord, “at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.” Nineveh repented and was spared, If therefore we unite with importunity and perseverance in prayer to the sovereign disposer of all events, and turn from our abominations to him from whom we have deeply revolted, we need not be discouraged by what is past, nor by the appearance of present danger; we may rest fearless of the invading foe: The Lord will be unto us as twice ten thousand shields, and should “the enemy come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.”

10 JA 66
 FINIS.

